

NEGRO SLAVERY.

No. VII.

INSURRECTIONS OF SLAVES IN THE WEST INDIES, PARTICULARLY IN DEMERARA.

ALL who are acquainted with the past history of the Slave Colonies, must be aware, that disturbances among the Slaves have frequently occurred, of a far more dangerous character than any which have taken place during the past year.

The rebellions in Jamaica, and the necessity to which the local authorities there were reduced, of negotiating with the insurgents, and granting them favourable terms, will be found displayed in the works of Long and Edwards. The rebellion of 1760, in that island, was marked by outrages on the part of the Slaves, and by a refinement of cruelty towards the criminals on the part of the Colonial Administration, the relation of which makes the blood run cold. In Grenada, in 1794, an insurrection, caused by French intrigue, led to a savage and sanguinary contest, which lasted for many months. On this occasion, the Christian Slaves, who had been converted by the Methodists, remained faithful to their masters; and many of them fought gallantly in their defence. In Dominica, about the year 1788, a serious revolt took place among the Slaves, which

was subdued with difficulty. Since that time more than one revolt has occurred there, which it was necessary to employ a military force to repress. It was on the occasion of the last of these, in 1813, that Governor Ainslie issued the proclamation which attracted so much notice at the time, offering rewards to those who should bring in any of the insurgents, men, women, or children, dead or alive. St. Vincent's has also been the scene of similar disturbances.

At Honduras an extensive revolt of the Slaves took place about four years ago; and it was the more dangerous, because there the Slaves were accustomed, from the nature of their employment, to the use of fire-arms, and were actually possessed both of arms and of ammunition. The gallant officer who commanded the settlement at that time, Colonel Arthur, was himself no Slave-holder; and the Slaves had also learnt to appreciate the rectitude and benevolence of his character. In his dispatch to Earl Bathurst, of the 16th May, 1820, he stated, that before he proceeded to employ the force which he had pre-

pared to subdue the insurgents, he resolved to try the milder means of persuasion. He went fearlessly among them, and inquired into their grievances, and was much concerned, he adds, to ascertain that they "had been treated with very unnecessary harshness by their owners, and had certainly good ground for complaint." He justly thought that to institute such an inquiry not only was the duty of a British governor, but was a much more likely method of subduing the insurrection, and securing the future tranquillity of the colony, than having recourse, in the first instance, to violence. He completely succeeded in his benevolent efforts. The evil was stayed without shedding a drop of blood; and the Slaves were induced to return peaceably to their work. This is an example well worthy of record and of imitation.

We will not dwell on the rebellions in Surinam or in Berbice, but come at once to Demerara, which will occupy the remainder of the present communication. In this colony, alarms of insurrection, and partial disturbances, have been frequent. We have already adverted* to the insurrection of 1795, the termination of which was followed by executions of so ferocious a description as to equal, if not surpass, in atrocity, the most revolting tales of savage life. No man will pretend that this disturbance, or any of those mentioned above, originated either with the Abolitionists or the Missionaries. Nothing was then known in Demerara either of the one or the other. Under the stern rule of the Dutch, the sulien repose of the colony had not yet been invaded by the intrusions either of philanthropy or of Christian zeal.

Since that period, partial disturbances have occasionally taken place: "I have known Demerara," says one gentleman, "for a number of years, and during that time the alarms of insurrection have been

frequent." Those who resided there at the time cannot have forgotten the case of Mr. Von B——. His Slaves had gone to complain to the Fiscal of excessive suffering; and, receiving no redress from him, had set off in a body to the woods. His son perished in an attempt to bring them back; on which parties were sent out into the woods to subdue them. They may also recollect another rising, a short time before; which was subdued, however, in a very different manner. The Missionary, Davies, was sent among them; and, by pointing out to them the fatal effects of their conduct, and employing the weapons of reason and persuasion, he induced them peaceably to return to their work. In the spring of 1822, also, upwards of a year before the parliamentary discussions on the subject of Slavery commenced, there was a fresh alarm of insurrection, and a plot was said to have been discovered for setting fire to George Town, the capital of the colony; and such was the impression of danger on this occasion, that a reward of one thousand pounds was offered for the discovery of the incendiaries. Little or nothing, however, was publicly said in this country of that, or of preceding alarms. It would have answered no colonial purpose, at that time, to blazon them abroad.

In No. V., we have pointed out some of the predisposing causes of insurrection in Demerara; and, in No. I., we have also given a delineation of the general character of Negro bondage in that colony, as it existed in 1822. Since that time we are led to believe, that none of its harsh features have been at all softened; that there has been no abatement of the severe exaction of labour, no cessation of the cart-whip, no more ready attention on the part of public functionaries to the redress of grievances. On the contrary, letters from the colony describe the evils of Slavery to have been aggra-

* Negro Slavery, No. V.

vated rather than diminished, during the past year; while at the same time a new cause of discontent was unhappily and most gratuitously furnished by the Colonial Government.

In 1810, the intolerance of the local authorities with respect to religious instruction, had placed the Missionaries under the necessity of applying for relief to his Majesty's Government. Lord Liverpool was then Secretary of State for the Colonial Department. His lordship, with that humanity and consideration which so much distinguish him, immediately interfered: and, in 1811, transmitted instructions to the Governor of Demerara on the subject, which proved effectual for securing the freedom of religious worship, and obviated the many hindrances which had previously been thrown in the way of the attendance of the Slaves. Under the operation of these judicious instructions, things proceeded with little or no interruption, except from occasional individual hostility, until the month of May last. In that month, Governor Murray issued a proclamation, imposing new restrictions on the freedom of religious worship; and, by an ingenious perversion of the liberal terms of Lord Liverpool's dispatch of 1811, which he actually makes the basis of the new regulations, he endeavours to shield his ill-timed policy from censure. The manifest tenor of his lordship's dispatch was to relieve the Slaves from unnecessary restraint, and not to restrain them, in their attendance on the means of instruction. The proclamation of Governor Murray had a direct contrary tendency. What could have dictated such a proclamation, at such a time, it is not easy to conceive. Its effects, whatever were the motives, have been disastrous; and to this rash and ill-judged measure may be traced much of the evil which has since occurred. The proclamation prohibited the Slaves from going to their chapel, even on

a Sunday, without a written pass from their owner or manager; and it recommended to the planters to attend themselves, or to send an overseer to attend, along with their Slaves, in order to judge of the soundness and safety of the doctrines which might be preached by the Missionaries. As no means were prescribed by which owners or managers could be compelled to give passes to the Slaves, the obstacles to their attendance were thus greatly increased. Passes were either entirely refused, or they were not given till it was too late to make use of them, or the owner or manager was absent or busy; and, even when their requests were complied with, the applicants were often exposed to contumely and reproach on account of their religion. Besides, to write and sign twenty, fifty, or a hundred passes, was no light task on a Sunday morning; and the manager who was called upon to perform it, might almost be excused for displaying his ill humour. But this was not all. Many of the Slaves to whom passes were refused resolved to brave all hazards rather than forsake the worship of God. They thus rendered themselves liable to punishment, for having violated the Governor's regulation, and cart-whippings on this account are said to have become frequent. Some of the planters interpreted the proclamation of the Governor to mean that the Slaves were not to engage in religious exercises, even in their own houses, without the leave of their master or manager; and this interpretation being, of course, favoured by such as were hostile to religious instruction, became a further source of vexatious interference. Such exercises were in some cases prohibited; and, in others, their religious books were taken from the Slaves, and destroyed. We know the exaltation of mind which suffering for the sake of religion is capable of generating; and this feeling, akin to the heroism of the martyr, is not confined to the colour of the skin

Some of the Slaves persevered in their attendance at chapel, and in religious exercises in their own houses, notwithstanding the penalties attached to such observances. In one case, a whole family which had distinguished itself by firmness in enduring punishment rather than omit the worship of God, was advertised for sale, with the design, as has been expressly stated, of separating its members and scattering them to a distance from each other. The disturbance broke out only a few days before this sale, which had excited much interest among the Slaves, was to have taken place.

Such was the state of things in Demerara in the months of June and July last, when at the close of the latter month the dispatch of Lord Bathurst arrived in the colony requiring the flogging of women to be abolished, and the whip to be laid aside in the field, as the instrument of coercion in the hands of the driver. We have before us the copy of a letter from a person holding a public situation in Demerara, dated the 6th September last, in which he states that at this time "the public mind was much excited; and that it was well known among the Slave population that something was going forward for their benefit, although the colonial newspapers were prohibited from touching on the subject; and it seemed evident to every one that the sooner some step, according with the wishes and desires of the General Government, was taken by the Colonial Government, the better; and every one looked to an immediate promulgation on the subject on the meeting of the Court of Policy; so much so, that on the day of its first meeting people were in town, we mean White persons, from most estates, for the purpose of returning to their estates informed and prepared how to act. The Court met, continued its sittings for several days; but nothing was done or known. Upon its adjourned meeting, a fortnight afterwards, precisely the same thing. A third ad-

joined meeting took place, to no better purpose. It was now understood, however, that there was a difference of opinion among the members of the court, and that some of those who are extensive proprietors argued that every concession to the Slave population was so much taken from the value of their property, and was leading to the absolute destruction of it, and that it was better to correspond with the Government before taking any step; and perhaps the matter might, on representation, be entirely abandoned. Thus the Court of Policy, after meeting for the *third* time, rose without doing any thing; at least without either public or private communication on the subject, or as to the result of their sittings."

It may be easily conceived in what a state of perturbation and anxiety the minds of the Negroes must have been kept, during this awful and protracted period of suspense. Every thing dear to them was felt to be at issue; and, knowing the men to whose decision their fate and that of their children was left, their alarms and apprehensions might be pardoned. We must place ourselves in their situation, if we would duly estimate its difficulties and temptations.

The Governor of Berbice, on receiving Lord Bathurst's dispatch, very judiciously employed a Missionary to explain its purport to the Slaves, and to address to them the necessary precautions and qualifications. At Berbice all has remained tranquil. Such was not the course pursued at Demerara. Whether Governor Murray imagined that the matter might be kept secret from the Slaves until a communication could be had with Lord Bathurst on the subject, we know not. In that case, he ought at least to have adopted measures for preserving the public peace in the interim. But the gentleman whom we have last quoted affirms, that "no measures of security were taken, nor any additional surveillance, except increas-

ing nominally the militia drill days to two days in the week; and even this," he says, "was not strictly acted on; the police, in all its branches, remaining in the same state of looseness and inactivity as usual." The Governor omitted even to guard the privacy of his own domestic circle. The whole tenor of the evidence on the trial of the riotous Slaves proves that the information respecting the contents of Lord Bathurst's dispatch, reached them principally through the medium of the Governor's own domestics*. On the trial of Jack Gladstone, whose name has become familiar to our readers, it appeared that Jack told his fellows that he had been informed by his friend Daniel, the Governor's servant, that "it was really true about their freedom." Not satisfied with this, the witness says he asked him whether he had himself read the newspaper? to which he answered No; but, in order to obviate all distrust, he adds, "I'll tell you a little news. The manager of Port Estate lately said to a Negro who was being flogged, 'what, because you are to be freed, you don't want to work!' What say you to that?" To this the witness says he replied, as well he might, "I am glad of it."

The expectations, therefore, on the part of the Slaves of some favourable change in their condition appear to have been derived either from the information conveyed to them by the Governor's domestics, or from the indiscreet expressions of their superiors, who, like the manager of Port Estate, chose to add to the severity of their penal inflictions the bitterness of disappointed hopes. As if it had been said to them—"You thought you were going to be free, and that the King was going to put an end to the whip; I will shew you what freedom you are to expect, and that whatever the King may say we will whip

on." It has been asserted indeed, that several proprietors thought it their duty to begin on their own estates the work of reform by laying aside the whip in the field. Whatever truth there may be in this statement as it respected a few individuals, whom it is impossible too highly to honour for their conduct, it is certain that the bulk of the planters pursued a different course; nay, some of them, in open and insolent contempt and derision of Lord Bathurst's instructions, sent their drivers into the field armed with two whips, instead of one.

Can we wonder at the extraordinary excitement which all these circumstances produced among the slaves? Was it possible that men like them, uninfluenced by principles and motives which might have produced a more unqualified forbearance, should not, under such circumstances, manifest some impatience of their lot? Was it possible that men, writhing under the lash, and witnessing its shameful infliction on the bared bodies of their wives and daughters, when they learnt on good authority that these severities had been proscribed by the supreme authority of the state, though they were nevertheless continued and even aggravated by their managers; was it possible, we say, for men in such circumstances, to remain in a state of undisturbed quiet, without a single movement for their relief? It was utterly impossible. The object of the movement which they did make, it is obvious from the whole of the evidence, was to obtain, from the constituted authorities of the colony, an explicit declaration as to the intentions of the Government towards them, and as to what their future condition was to be. In the prosecution of this object, the Slaves of several estates on the east coast appear to have agreed to lay aside their tools; in other words, to strike work until they could ob-

* How it has happened that these domestics were neither brought to trial, nor produced as witnesses, is a mystery yet to be explained.

tain the requisite satisfaction. The 18th of August was the day chosen for the purpose. On that day several outrages were committed by the Slaves. They seized such arms as they could obtain, which however were few in number; and they confined in the stocks several overseers and managers, who either resisted their proceedings, or were quitting the estates in order to spread the alarm of insurrection; and they are also said to have fired some shots, and to have roughly handled some individuals. But even this degree of violence appears to have been beyond their purpose. Telemachus says, that orders were given that "they must not hurt the White people;" and several White persons testified that when Jack, who seemed to be the leader, knew of their confinement in the stocks, he immediately caused them to be released. It was reported at first that several White persons had been put to death by the Slaves; but this report appears, after a minute inquiry, to have had no foundation in truth. One White man only, we believe, was killed; and his death is said to have been caused by an accidental shot from his own party.

Such appears to have been the extent of the violence of which the refractory Slaves were guilty. Neither in the evidence which has been published, nor in the various statements of individuals, have we been able to discover one well-authenticated fact which goes beyond it. They do not appear to have taken the life of a single White, to have demolished a single house, or to have set fire to a single cane-piece. It is a remarkable circumstance that on the very day on which they struck work, a considerable body of the Slaves, amounting, it is said, to about a thousand, had a long conference with the Governor, who happened to be riding out in the direction of the disturbed estates. To him they came forward to represent their grievances, and to solicit his interference. They are said to

have also expressed to him their loyalty to the King, and their desire to act peaceably; and it does not appear that any one of those who were present at *this* conference were guilty of any violence, or even of any disrespect towards the Governor. What tone he took we have yet to learn: we have reason however to believe, that he quitted them without having made any satisfactory communication on the subject which chiefly agitated them, and we have not been told that he gave them any assurance that the grievances under which they laboured would be inquired into and redressed. Had he done so, it would, without doubt, have been stated by the planters by way of aggravating the guilt of the insurgents. No such statement, however, has been made in any public or private communication which we have seen. It may therefore be assumed that no such assurance was given; and this reserve on the part of the Governor would naturally be associated, in the minds of the Slaves, with the discouraging circumstance that he was himself a planter.

The Slaves, however, do not seem on this account to have abandoned the hope of effecting their object without violence. Two days more pass, and no cane-piece is consumed, no house is demolished, no life is taken; though in the interval some of their number are said to have been killed and some made prisoners. Nay, when Colonel Leahy advanced to the disturbed estates with a considerable force composed of King's troops and militia, the Slaves were so far from manifesting any hostile purpose that they came forward in a large body to confer with that officer. They are said to have represented to him, as they had done to the Governor, their loyalty to the King, and the confidence they placed in the friendly feelings of the King's officers towards them. To the King's officers, therefore, they addressed themselves, imploring their protection.

against the planters, of whose exactions and severities they complained. While they were thus conferring with Colonel Leahy, or just as their conference ceased, the troops are said to have begun firing upon them, and, some accounts add, without orders. As the Slaves were crowded together, and were not expecting an attack, the carnage was considerable. In a few minutes one hundred and fifty of them, or, according to some statements, two hundred, lay dead or wounded on the spot; the rest, as soon as they recovered from their surprise, fled with precipitation, and without offering any resistance whatever*. The carnage appears to have been for a time pursued. The Indians were called in and used as bloodhounds to track the fugitives in the woods, and to bring them in alive or dead; whether with the stipulation of the usual reward, on the exhibition of the right arm of the murdered Slave, we know not. Courts-martial were immediately put in requisition to try the prisoners; and we have yet to learn how many hundreds of these wretched beings have perished by the sword and the gallows. But, be the number what it may, a thousand as some say, or eight hundred, or one hundred, it becomes the Parliament of this country to make diligent inquisition respecting the blood which has been thus profusely shed, and to judge fairly between the oppressor and the oppressed.

The very mode in which these trials are said to have been conducted, will afford no small matter of deep reflection to the people of England. It will enable them to appreciate the system which they are upholding, not less by their fleets and armies than by the large

amount of money they are annually paying to the planters, in the way of bounties and protecting duties on their sugars.

The accused were brought to the bar of the Court not only strongly guarded, but tightly pinioned; and they are said to have remained pinioned during their trial. They had been made previously to undergo interrogatories, and the particulars which had thus been drawn from them were in the hands of the President of the Court. They had no legal assistance. They had not even been informed of the specific charges on which they were to be tried until placed at the bar. The accusation was then read to them, and the trial proceeded. The evidence admitted by the Court was of the most vague and unsatisfactory description, such as would not have been tolerated for one moment in any court of justice in this country†; and it is obvious, that, under the circumstances of the case, the accused could have no adequate means of bringing forward exculpatory testimony. After conviction, confessions were drawn from many of them, which were directed, almost exclusively, to that point which appears to have formed the supreme wish of the planters; we mean the inculpation of Mr. Smith, the Missionary. These confessions, however, would serve of themselves to vindicate the character of that deeply-injured individual. They are destitute of all pretence to be regarded as evidence; and they sufficiently betray their origin—the hatred of Smith entertained by the Planters, and the terror of the Slave in the view of the gallows that awaited him. Many of these confessions, however, when they found that their falsehoods would not avail

* Different statements have been given of this important transaction. But after a careful comparison of those statements, and a minute inquiry into the circumstance^s of the case, the above has appeared to us to be the most correct account of it.

† Be it remembered also, that the testimony on which so much blood has been shed was that of Slaves—a species of testimony rejected as utterly unworthy of credit, as totally inadmissible, by all our Colonial Legislatures, in any cause affecting a free man, whether civil or criminal.

to save them from death, declared, in the most explicit terms, the perfect innocence of Mr. Smith; and deplored, as the most painful circumstance of their lot, that they should have been induced, by the combined influence of hope and terror, unjustly to accuse that good man.

The case of Mr. Smith must be reserved for another opportunity. That of the Slaves is sufficient to engage our present attention.

We will not stop to compare the conduct of the constituted authorities at Demerara with that which was pursued, on a similar occasion, by the authorities at Honduras, as we have stated it above; although there might be found reason to believe that the motives which respectively influenced them were as different as the results. We would beg, however, to contrast the measure of justice dealt out, in the West Indies, to rioters, according as they are White or Black. In Barbadoes a White mob assemble and commit the most violent outrages, deliberately protracted for several days, in the very midst of the capital of the colony, and in sight of the government house; they set the laws at open defiance; they threaten and even attempt the lives of his Majesty's subjects, and force them into exile after having destroyed their property; they openly denounce vengeance on any one who shall dare to take any part in bringing the delinquents to justice; and they promise to these, if brought to trial, all the impunity which a friendly jury, determined to go all lengths in their behalf, can ensure to them. And what is the conduct of the King's Governor? He absolutely refuses to interfere for the protection either of the injured and outraged individuals or of their property. "I am sorry for you," he says; "I wish you well; but I fear that the arm of protection, if I extend it to you, will be represented as the arm of tyranny." And when, after having been called upon in

vain to prevent the crimes which were about to be perpetrated almost in his view, he issues at length (the crimes having been perpetrated) a proclamation offering a reward for the detection of the delinquents. The delinquents, who glory in what they had done, pour the contempt which it deserved on this impotent effort to save appearances: they brave the Governor to his face, and set utterly at nought his tardy interference.

We have no such misplaced lenity, no such limping and powerless exertion of authority to complain of, in the case of the Black mob of Demerara, as we have to contemplate in that of the nearly contemporaneous White mob of Barbadoes. Martial law, blood, slaughter, pursuit, summary and sweeping execution are promptly resorted to by the local authorities of Demerara. Day after day, and week after week, witness the steady and undeviating march of their retributive vengeance. Scores, nay hundreds, of victims are required to satisfy its demands. And the audacity of the Negro in having indulged even a thought or a dream of *freedom* (a word not even to be murmured in the West Indies), and in having dared (somewhat impatiently and irregularly, inconsistently at least with plantation discipline) to demand what it was which the reported benevolence of his sovereign really designed for him, must be expiated by a river of blood.

Let us suppose such a case as this to have occurred in England. Let us suppose that the miners of Cornwall, or the iron-workers of Wales, or the keelmen of the Tyne, or the weavers of Lancashire, had conceived themselves (whether justly or not) to have been aggrieved by their masters, whom they suspected, on what appeared to them good grounds, of withholding from them the advantages which the law allowed them; that in consequence of this apprehension they had struck work, and refused to resume it until they had obtained the requisite explanations;

and that they had even gone the length of threatening violence to their masters, and of maltreating such of their body as continued to work in the usual way. Let us suppose all this, yet would it be tolerated that these men should be forthwith attacked by a military force, killed in cold blood by hundreds, hunted down like wild beasts, tried and executed by scores as traitors? What would be said of such a proceeding? Let the clamour produced by the unhappy affair at Manchester testify. Or suppose, when such large bodies of Spitalfields weavers crowded last year to Westminster, filling Palace-yard and all the avenues and passages of the Houses of Parliament with their numbers, beseeching and imploring the members of the Legislature to protect them from the unjust purposes, as they deemed them, of their masters; suppose, we say, that Parliament, instead of lending a patient ear to their complaints, and suspending even the intended course of legislation, in deference to their perhaps unreasonable fears and misapprehensions (for such was the line of its policy), had called out the military to sabre and hunt them down by hundreds, and had then tried and executed the survivors by scores; what would have been the general feeling amongst us? Should we not have raised our voices as one man against such insufferable tyranny and oppression?

Or take a still stronger case, that of the agricultural labourers, who in open day have been proceeding in bodies to the destruction of threshing machines, and to other acts of lawless violence; or that of the Luddites; or that of the Blanketeers; and let us ask whether it would have been endured that even these misguided, and many of them most criminal, individuals should have been dealt with as the poor, ignorant, oppressed, cart-whipped Slaves of Demerara have been dealt with? Again, therefore, we say it, the country is bound to make inquisition

respecting the blood which has been there so profusely shed. Let the whole of the documents on the subject be forthwith laid on the table of Parliament, and, if the statement we have now made be incorrect, its incorrectness will thus be established: if otherwise, Parliament and the Public will feel that if they hesitate to apply an effectual remedy to such evils as have now been placed before them, they will be justly chargeable with all the atrocities which have been or may hereafter be committed, and with all the blood which has been or may still be shed, in the maintenance of this abominable system.

And if, in a case in which the insurgents conducted themselves with such singular moderation and forbearance, neither taking away life nor being guilty of massacre or conflagration, their irregularities and their refractory conduct have been visited with such tremendous vengeance, what are we to expect will be the nature and extent of the punishments which those are fated to endure, who may hereafter be led by their present experience of the tender mercies of their superiors, to plunge, on any future occasion of the same kind, still deeper in crime, and to regard it as the only course of safety, not to complain or to remonstrate, not to strike work or to apply to the constituted authorities; but to proceed at once to devastation and blood? Again, we say, let the documents necessary to elucidate this transaction be produced—the entire documents—the records of the Fiscal's office, the dispatches of the Governor, the reports of the inferior officers, both civil and military; the examinations and depositions of witnesses, the previous interrogatories addressed to the accused, with their answers, the whole detail of the proceedings on their trial, their defence, their sentence, and their punishment. And let the evidence of witnesses and the declarations of prisoners be communicated to us, not in the language into which they

have been *translated*, but in that in which they were given; not in the balanced phrases which would be unintelligible to the Slaves even in our other colonies, but in the mongrel dialect of Dutch and English, which forms the colloquial language of the Slaves of Demerara. We shall then

be in a better capacity to judge between the parties; and shall be able, with satisfaction to ourselves, to ascertain whether our wretched fellow-subjects in that colony have met with their fair share of even-handed, temperate, British justice.

Before we conclude this Number, it will be proper to advert to a document on which much stress has been laid by West-Indians; we mean what is called the "Defence" of Jack; and which is, without doubt, as pure a piece of mystification as ever was employed to prop up a bad cause. So important, however, as we understand, has it been regarded by the authorities of Demerara, that Jack's life has been spared; and this defence, besides being dwelt upon by their periodical organs in this country, as decisive proof of the guilt both of the Anti-Slavery Society and of "Parson" Smith, has been stated by several planters resident among us to be worth a thousand pounds to their cause. We do not believe it will do them any good whatever. It overshoots its mark, and, by attempting too much, lays bare its real purpose. A man with a halter round his neck, who knows that the tightening or the loosening of it will depend on the satisfaction which what he may say shall give to the arbiters of his fate, is very likely to consider, not what is true, but what will please these awful personages, and so save himself. Accordingly, the prisoner very judiciously labours in his "defence" to shew that Mr. Wilberforce, and "Parson" Smith, and the Bible, were the three great incendiaries who had lighted the flame of insurrection in Demerara. This last point was a master stroke of policy; for the wise men of that colony knew that if they could but discredit the Bible, and

establish its character as an instrument of sedition and rebellion, they should not only get rid of "Parson" Smith, but get rid also at once of all the vile and troublesome Missionaries who have been wickedly labouring to shed light on the pagan darkness of the West Indies. The Bible being condemned as a bad and dangerous book, those whose special work it is to teach its doctrines to the Slaves, must, of course, be proscribed also with it, as bad and dangerous men. Jack's "defence" is so conducted, that the British public are led to infer from it, that he was a member of Mr. Smith's congregation; but the fact is, that though his father, Quamina, belonged to it, he himself never did belong to it; nay, that he had never made any religious profession whatever. He had been united, indeed, by one of the Missionaries, to a young woman on a neighbouring estate, by whom he had two children; but *her* master had deprived him of her, and appropriated her to his own use; a circumstance which was not calculated to increase his attachment to the present system. But mark the words put into the mouth of this Negro, and how admirably they go to confirm all the favourite views and preconceived notions of the planters. "Before this court," he says, "I solemnly avow, that many of the lessons and other parts of Scripture selected for us in Bethel Chapel, tended to make us dissatisfied with our situation as Slaves; and had there been no Methodists* on the

* Jack, if he knew any thing of Mr. Smith, must have known he was not a Methodist; and as for the Methodists, it has been asserted by themselves, and the fact has not been contradicted, that not one Slave who was a member of their society took any part in the disturbance.

East Coast, there would have been no revolt. Those deepest in the rebellion were in 'Parson' Smith's confidence. The half sort of instruction we received, I now see was highly improper. It put those who could read a little, on examining the Bible, and selecting passages applicable to our situation as Slaves, and served to make us dissatisfied with our owners; as we were not always able to make out the real meaning of such passages. I would not have avowed this to you now, were I not sensible that I ought to make every atonement for my past conduct, and put you on your guard in future."—Those who can bring themselves to believe that this was the speech of a Demerara Slave, must be prepared also to admit that the time is come for giving such Slaves their freedom. Jack is certainly as fit, intellectually, as his masters, to take his place in the Court of Policy, and is fully prepared (to use the language of the parliamentary resolutions) "for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects."

But we should be deceiving ourselves, if we were thus to judge. The speech is not the speech of Jack. It bears, however, a close resemblance to some passages in the elaborate but most fallacious report of Mr. Robertson, the registrar of the colony, who expresses, we presume, the general sentiments of the colonists on the subject of the Missionaries. Jack very prudently coincides in their views, as he would have coincided in any other set of views which would have answered the same important end of saving his life. But who has manufactured his speech, and *done* it into good English, and given to it its air of philosophical moralizing? This is a question to which we should much like to have a true answer. At all events, as Jack is happily still alive, Government may send for him to this country, that

we may profit by the profound results of his experience; and that we may judge, by actual intercourse, of his capacity to make such orations. The planters say, Jack's speech is worth a thousand pounds to their cause. We are sure that Jack's presence, after that speech, would be worth a thousand pounds to ours.

To shew that we are supported in this view of the subject by no mean authority, we quote from the *Guiana Chronicle* of the 17th Dec. 1823, published in George Town, the capital of Demerara, the following passage: The Editor deems it "a task of considerable difficulty" to "explain to the Negroes the sentiments conveyed in Lord Bathurst's dispatch." "To make a Negro thoroughly understand the difference between simply *ameliorating* his condition and bestowing on him absolute freedom, requires a knowledge of African and Creole character which few are endowed with." "A Negro can comprehend what is meant, by allowing him one, two, or three days in the week to himself, &c.; but it will take more shrewdness, skill, and dexterity, than commonly falls to the lot of human kind, to beat into his head the real purpose of indefinite measures for his *amelioration*." "We should like to hear a manager give a satisfactory answer to a Negro, who should ask him what the King meant by '*ameliorating* his condition;' we think it would be a posing question. The references, too, which the noble Secretary makes to '*special benefits*, British Parliament, Majesty's Government, and House of Commons, will carry with them dark and mysterious significations, which it will require considerable powers of invention to elucidate to Quashy's satisfaction."

If this statement be true, and we believe it to be so, then, we again ask, who made the speech which has been put into the mouth of Jack Gladstone?

In the Royal Gazette of Jamaica of the 20th to the 27th of September there occur, among a great multitude of similar advertisements, the following: viz.—

“ St. Elizabeth's, Sept. 24, 1823.

“ Notice is hereby given, That on Wednesday the 8th day of October next, at the Post-Office, at Black-River, between the hours of 10 and 12 o'clock in the forenoon, I will put up to Public Sale, and cause to be sold to the highest and best bidder, a Negro Man named Ben, a domestic, belonging to Mrs. Jane McDonald; a Negro Man named Robin, Field-Negro, to Frederick William Blake; a Negro Man named William, a sawyer, to Catherine Robertson, and an old Chaise, to Isaac Mullings, levied on for arrears of taxes due by them respectively.—J. GRIFFITH, C. C.”

“ St. George's, Sept. 22, 1823.

“ Notice is hereby given, That on Monday the 6th day of October next, at the Court-House, Buff Bay, between the hours of 10 and 12 o'clock in the forenoon, I will put up to Public Sale, and cause to be sold to the highest and best bidder, a Negro Woman, named Betsy

Williams, a Field-Woman, levied on for taxes due by Margaret's Hope; also Emilia, a Servant-Girl, for taxes due by Frances E. Thombs; James, a House-Servant, for taxes due by Pleasant View and the estate of George Jackson; and George, a Negro Boy, for taxes due by Robert Calder.—WM. ESPEUT, C. C.”

“ St. George's, Sept. 20, 1823.

“ Notice is hereby given, That on Monday the 6th day of October next, at the Court-house, Buff-Bay, between the hours of 10 and 12 o'clock in the forenoon, I will put up to Public Sale, and cause to be sold to the highest and best bidder, a Mulatto Boy named George Bond, and a Mulatto Girl named Charlotte Brown, both House-Servants, levied on for taxes due by Henry Bond, Esq. and Belle-Vue; also another House-Servant, named Catherine Armstrong, levied on for taxes due by Mount-Edwards.

“ WM. ESPEUT, C. C.”

We should be glad to know how the West Indians will prove to the People of England that these ten individuals, all sold for payment of taxes, were not cruelly torn from their weeping families, and, by this most iniquitous process, separated from them for ever. Shall this opprobrious state of things continue?

In the same Gazette of the 11th of October, 1823, an extract is given from a work published in England, entitled “ The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin, Esq.” The following passages appear there without comment of any kind.—

“ The West Indies are the grave at once of the physical and moral qualities of our army. The character is no less liable to suffer by residence in a climate where vice and disease, debauchery and death, go hand in hand.”

“ To the attentive observer, the old West-Indian is as marked a variety in the shades of professional character, as is the sot, the spendthrift, or the sensualist in private life. Several causes might be assigned for this unfavourable influence upon personal qualities; but perhaps the most powerful have their origin in the licentious tone of manners and life in the islands, and in the indifference which they, who have become habituated to witness the virulence of disease, are led to regard its mental attacks on their most intimate associates.

“ It is difficult for the man who has never emerged from the bosom of English society, to form a correct idea of the utter disregard of temperance and decency which prevails almost universally throughout the islands. Intense heat is made the excuse for unlimited indulgence, at all hours of the morning, in the use of intoxicating liquors; while the small proportion of our own countrywomen, and the listless insipidity of the Creole, render an abandoned intimacy with the female part of the Slave population as common as it is disgraceful. One universal profligacy pervades the land,” &c.

Had this description been untrue, the Editor of the Royal Gazette of Jamaica would hardly have chosen such a time for inserting it without a single observation.